

Simmonds Building  
2041 N. Fifteenth St.  
Arlington  
Arlington County  
Virginia

HABS No. VA-1280

HABS  
VA,  
7-ARL,  
9-

PHOTOGRAPHS AND  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, DC 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

SIMMONDS BUILDING

HABS No. VA-1280

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VA,  
7-ARL,  
9-

Location: 2041 N. Fifteenth Street, Arlington County, Virginia

Present Owner: Sidney G. Simmonds, et. al.

Present Use: Offices of Simmonds and Klimer, accountants

Significance: The Simmonds Building is one of a group of small, one- and two-story commercial buildings erected in the blocks surrounding the series of Arlington County courthouses during the first half of the twentieth century, which were occupied by lawyers and other professionals. In scale, Colonial Revival-styling, and materials, it is akin to the nearby Lawyers' Row structures that were demolished in 1990 (See HABS No. VA-1277).

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1941.
2. Architect: Upman and Adams.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The Simmonds Building occupies lot 25 and part of lot 24, block 9, Fort Myer Heights subdivision. Records are found in the Virginia Land Records Office, Arlington County. The following is an incomplete chain of title:

Deed of Easement dated 14 November 1940: Fairfax and Alexandria Building and Loan Association Inc. to Arlington County, Virginia. Deed Book 526, page 155.

Deed of Trust dated 1 June 1951: James H. Simmonds and John L. Culler to Edwin Jacobson and Thomas E. Lodge, trustees. Deed Book 100, page 152.

Deed dated 1 June 1951: James H. Simmonds, John L. Culler, and George Damm to Commonwealth Building Corporation. Deed Book 1001, page 441.

Deed dated 24 March 1952: Commonwealth Building Corporation to Simmonds and Culler Limited Partnership. Deed Book 1044, page 438.

Deed dated 30 June 1964: James H. Simmonds, Jean D. Simmonds, Ruth B. Culler, Edith Rice Damm, Robert C. Coleburn, and Cornelia B. Coleburn to James H. Simmonds and Robert C. Coleburn, tenants in common. Deed Book 1553.

Deeds of Gift dated 27 December 1988 and 17 January 1989: James H. Simmonds to Sidney G. Simmonds, Susan J. Simmonds, John S. Simmonds, and James Gordon Simmonds. Deed Books 2363, page 1233; 2367, page 3.

4. Builder: G. Morris Steinbraker.
5. Original plans and construction: None have been located.

B. Historical Context:

Architect Frank Upman (1872-1948) began practicing in Washington in 1902 where he worked for Henry Ives Cobb. As a principal of Harding and Upman he designed several structures in the city; he was a member of the Washington Chapter-American Institute of Architects (1919) and the Allied Architects' Association of Washington. Upman also designed Washington's Congress Hotel and Woodward Building, where he had an office at No. 1003. The Woodward (1909) is considered "the most exuberant example of a handful of Spanish Colonial apartments built in D.C." While a partner in Upman and Adams, designed several buildings in Arlington--especially Spanish Revival styles--including the Jesse Building (1927), formerly part of Lawyers' Row.

Circumstances are unclear, but there was some sort of relationship between the county and the Upman and Percy C. Adams collaborative, which survived from 1917 until Upman's death in 1948.<sup>1</sup> Adams arrived in D.C. in 1909 and practiced as Averill and Adams until 1914. He worked alone from 1914 until 1917, when he joined Frank Upman to specialize in schools and fine residences. In 1916, for instance--when Upman lived in Arlington's Livingstone Heights--proposals for a new Cherrydale school and auditorium were to be delivered to his District office; and by 1930, Adams is credited with designing "practically all the schools in Arlington, Virginia."<sup>2</sup> Upman probably also worked on at least the south courthouse wing addition.<sup>3</sup> Architect Frederick Tilp worked for Upman and Adams on several projects, including an addition to the courthouse, many schools, and Frank Lyon's "apartments."

The Simmonds Building originally housed the offices of the Fairfax and Alexandria Building and Loan Association and the law office of James H. Simmonds, attorney.

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<sup>1</sup> Henry and Elsie Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased) (Los Angeles: New Age Publications, 1956), 613; James Goode, Best Addresses (Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988), 114; Arlington County Monitor (20 October 1916). "Frank Upman," AIA membership application, 1919; Frederick Tilp, Alexandria, to Eleanor Lee Templeman, Arlington, 26 December, 1974.

<sup>2</sup> John Clagett Proctor, ed., Washington - Past and Present, vol. 4 (NY: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930), 404-05; The Monitor (26 May 1916).

<sup>3</sup> Frederick Tilp letter.

A native of Virginia, Simmonds moved to Arlington from Culpeper in 1912; he served as vice president of the Virginia Bar Association in 1957-58. Simmonds and his partners eventually bought the building, which is presently used by the accounting firm Simmonds and Klimer. Sidney Simmonds, Frank Simmond's son, is a partner in this firm. The Simmonds family retains ownership of the structure as well as an adjacent lot and structures.

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: This one-story Colonial Revival structure is three bays wide and five bays deep; its corner siting permits two modestly decorated facades.
2. Condition: Very good.

### B. Description of Exterior:

1. Overall dimensions: One story, 3,952 square feet.
2. Foundations: Brick.
3. Wall construction: Concrete block faced with red brick. There is one course of vertical brick stretchers at the water-table level. Above that, the brick is laid in running bond; below it, in Flemish bond.
4. Structural system, framing: Concrete-block.
5. Chimneys: One exterior brick chimney is located north of the center bay of the west facade.
6. Porches: A concrete stoop with three steps is on the south facade.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: All doors are panelled and set in wood frames, which are painted white. The door on the south facade has three lights above a wood panel. The wood panel has 1" holes drilled through it in a diamond pattern. This door is flanked by two cast-concrete pilasters with plain bases and bull's-eye medallions at the capitals. The door in the east facade is glazed above a wood panel; it is flanked by sidelights. Brick quoin detailing flanks this door. There is a door in the west facade at the basement level, in the center bay.
  - b. Windows: All windows on the first floor are double, eight-light

casements with surrounding glazing. The basement features awning windows. All window frames and trim are painted white.

8. Roof:

- a. Shape, covering: Hip roof covered with asbestos shingles. There is a triangular pediment above the door on the east facade; a segmental pediment above the door on the south facade. Both secondary roofs have standing-seam metal coverings. The hood over the east door is supported by two wood brackets.
- b. Cornice: Single, plain plank painted white.

C. Description of Interior:

1. Floor plans:

- a. Cellar: The cellar contains six rooms, four north of the stairs. The stairs access an L-shaped room, which contains an exterior door in the west wall and a closet in the east wall. The room in the northwest corner features built-in shelves on all four walls. Cabinets with brass fittings top the shelves on the south wall east of the door. The room at the northeast corner contains a large, free-standing safe. The room in the second bay from the north features built-in shelves on the south wall east of the interior door. South of the stairs are two long, narrow rooms. That occupying the east half of the building, used as a library and conference room, has closets at the north end. Two doors in the interior wall lead to the furnace room. An oil furnace is in the northeast corner of the room; a walk-in safe is adjacent to the furnace.
- b. First floor: The front door (opening to N. Fifteenth Street) leads to a small vestibule that opens into an L-shaped lobby. A walk-in safe occupies the north-west corner of the room. A curved glass-block wall separates the receptionist's office from the lobby. A short hall on a north-south axis leads to the rear of the building. To the west of the hall are two bathrooms; to the east is a small office and a closet. Stairs to the cellar originate at the northeast corner of the hall, which terminates in a common area. At the north end of the room are two offices; to the west are two smaller offices.

2. Stairways: A single-turn stair connects the first floor and the cellar. The concrete risers are carpeted. The landing, which the door facing N. Court House Road opens on to, is covered with linoleum. The landing at the bottom of the stairs is carpeted. Two steps at the north and south edges of the bottom landing lead to the cellar.

3. Flooring: Concrete throughout. On the first floor, all rooms have wall-to-wall carpeting. The bathroom floors are covered in black-and-white checkered linoleum. In the cellar, only the storage/furnace room is uncarpeted.
4. Wall and ceiling finish:
  - a. Cellar: Except for the furnace room, all walls feature wood paneling. The north-south interior wall of the storage room is unfinished. The exterior walls of the storage room and library are plaster. The plaster walls of the storage room are unpainted; those of the library are painted white. Ceilings are acoustical tile. The ceiling of the storage room is unfinished.
  - b. First floor: Walls are plaster painted white. Ceilings feature acoustical tile. The bathroom walls are white tile below and plaster above; the ceilings are plaster painted white.
5. Doorways and doors: Doorways throughout feature plain wood trim. In the cellar, all trim is unpainted. On the first floor, all trim is painted white. Interior doors in the cellar are hollow panel. On the first floor, all doors except for bathrooms are glazed panels topped by hopper windows. Bathroom doors unglazed panels. The doors of the two walk-in safes are metal set in metal frames and feature combination locks.
6. Decorative features:
  - a. Cellar: All rooms except the furnace room contain baseboard (a plain board topped with quarter-round molding) and crown molding. In addition, the room in the second bay from the north has chair rail. None of the molding is painted, it matches the wood paneling.
  - b. First floor: Baseboard, crown molding, and chair rail throughout. All windows have box cornices. All trim, except in the northwest and northeast corner rooms, is painted white. Trim in the northwest room is green; in the northeast room it is blue.
7. Lighting fixtures:
  - a. Cellar: Fluorescent throughout. The room in the west center bay also contains an electric chandelier with five "candles."
  - b. First floor: Incandescent fixtures with frosted-glass globes hanging from metal chains are located in the lobby, hall, and bathrooms. Fluorescent fixtures are located in all office areas.

8. Heating: Oil furnace; iron radiators throughout building.

D. Site:

1. General setting: This building is located on the northwest corner of the intersection of N. Court House Road and N. Fifteenth Street, a municipal and commercial hub of Arlington County that was once lined with modest Colonial Revival-style structures such as this. It is north of the 1960 Arlington County Court House; it faced the original and 1960s-era county jails, and is catty-corner to the newest county jail located on the site of Lawyers' Row.
2. Landscaping, enclosures: Boxwood shrubs flank each door and are planted at the corners of the building. A border of annuals spans the south facade in front of the shrubs. A hedge crowns the bank at the south end of the side yard. A small yard reminiscent of a sunken garden is located to the west.

PART III. SOURCES OF INFORMATION

A. Primary and unpublished sources:

Interview with Sidney Simmonds, Arlington County. 6 September 1990.

Arlington County Monitor, 20 October 1916 and 26 May 1916.

"Frank Upman." American Institute of Architects membership application. 4 October 1919. Record Group 803, Box 232.

Tilp, Frederick. 26 December. Letter from Alexandria to Eleanor Lee Templeman, Arlington, 1974. Virginia Room, 23-1-1-56, Series 1, Rixey Mansion, 1957-74.

B. Secondary Sources:

Goode, James. Best Addresses. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1988.

Proctor, John Clagett, editor. Washington - Past and Present, Vol. 4. New York: Lewis Historical Publishing Co., 1930.

Withey, Henry and Elsie. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased). Los Angeles: New Age Publications, 1956.

C. Arlington County records:

Deed Books, Office of the Clerk of Court.  
Real Estate Assessments, Office of Real Estate Assessments.  
Building Permit Card Files, Virginia Planning Office.

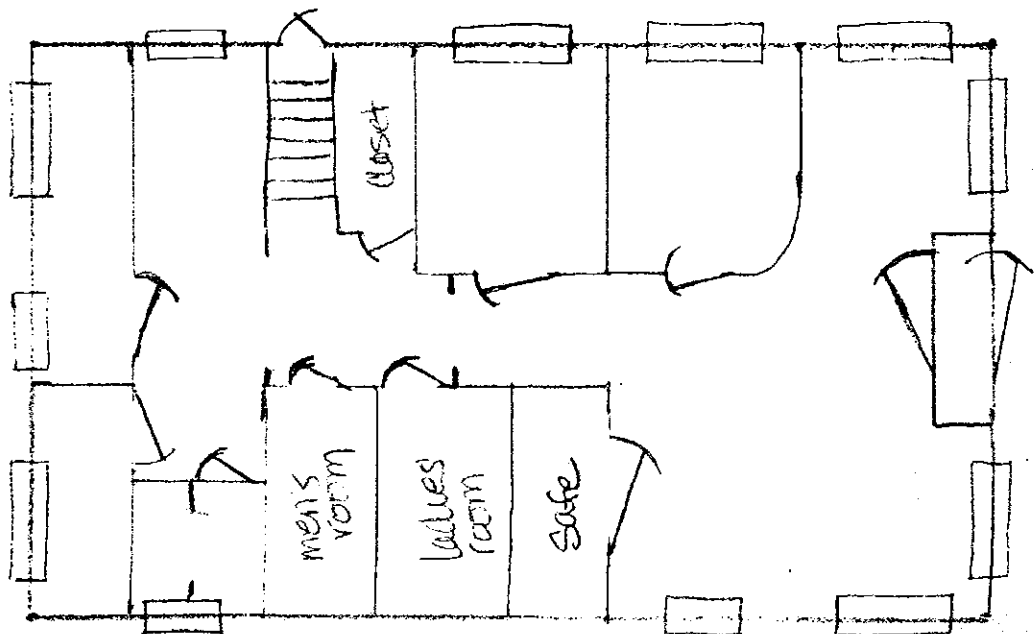
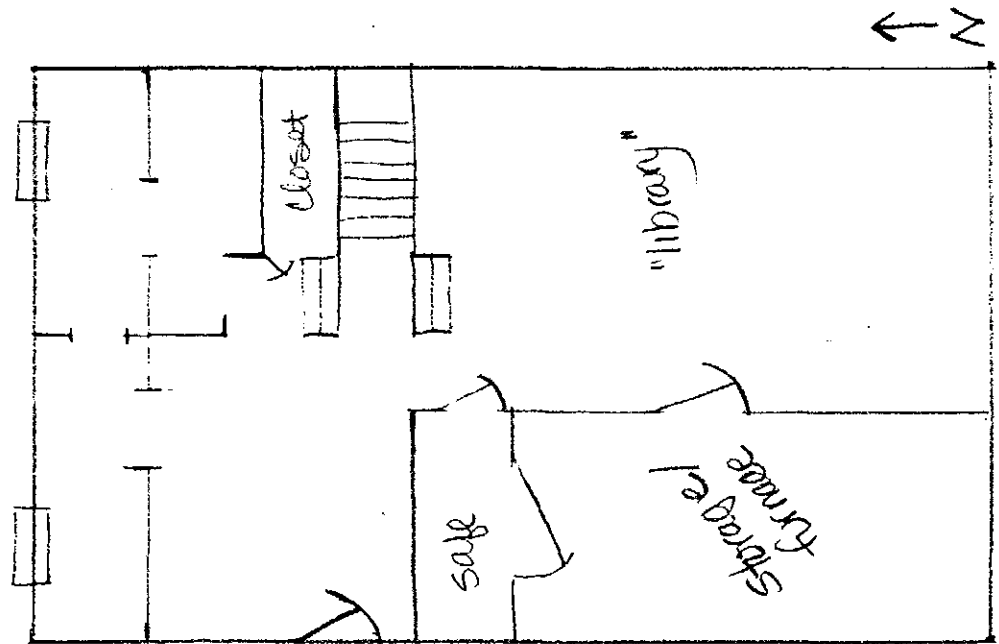
- D. Likely Sources Not Yet Consulted: The photographic archives of the Arlington Historical Society may contain old views.

Prepared by:  
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Arlington Heritage Alliance  
Spring 1990

#### PART IV. PROJECT INFORMATION

This documentation project was coordinated by Sara Amy Leach for the Arlington Heritage Alliance Inc. with the sponsorship of the Bell Atlantic Charitable Foundation, to mitigate the impending loss of several historic Arlington County buildings. Estella Bryans-Munson served as project historian, and John Schwartz was the large-format photographer. All documentation is available from the HABS Collection, Prints and Photographs Collection, at the Library of Congress, and the Virginia Room, Arlington County Library.





Sketch plan, first floor (bottom) and cellar (top). Not drawn to scale. By Bryans-Munson.